Treasury Sanctions South Sudanese First Vice President for Role in Serious Human Rights Abuse

January 8, 2020

Washington – Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned the First Vice President of South Sudan, Taban Deng Gai (Deng) for his involvement in serious human rights abuse, including the disappearance and deaths of civilians. Deng has acted to divide and sow distrust within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – In Opposition (SPLM-IO) and broader Nuer community, which has extended the conflict in South Sudan and deteriorated the reconciliation and peace process. The Government of South Sudan's refusal to create political space for dissenting voices — from opposition parties, ethnic groups, civil society, or media — has been a key factor in the country's inability to implement a peace agreement and ongoing acts of violence against civilians.

"Taban Deng Gai's attempt to silence the opposition party is derailing the country's ability to implement a peace agreement," said Deputy Secretary Justin G. Muzinich. "The United States calls on all nations to exclude from the international financial system those who jeopardize South Sudan's future."

This action is pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 13818, which builds upon and implements the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and targets perpetrators of serious human rights abuse and corruption.

As First Vice President, Deng reportedly arranged and directed the disappearance and deaths of human rights lawyer Samuel Dong Luak (Dong) and SPLM-IO member Aggrey Idry (Aggrey). Deng directed these actions in order to solidify his position within President Kiir's government and to intimidate members of the SPLM-IO. The designation of Deng follows the December 10, 2019, designations of five South Sudanese individuals who were also involved in the disappearance and reported deaths of Dong and Aggrey.

In September 2018, South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar reached a revitalized peace agreement that called for the formation of a national unity government on May 12, 2019. Government and opposition leaders extended that deadline twice, most recently on November 7, 2019, but more than 50 days into the extended pre-

transition period, there have been no concrete steps to create the security conditions conducive to implementing a peace deal. Since the September 2018 agreement, which included a permanent ceasefire, hundreds of civilians have been killed, raped, and abducted, including in clashes in December 2019. More than 50,000 civilians have fled their homes as a result of the violence, according to the UN. The U.S. Government will not hesitate to target those who have perpetuated the conflict in South Sudan and will continue to apply pressure on the senior leadership of South Sudan to take concrete measures to bring peace and stability to the country.

TABAN DENG GAI

In January 2017, South Sudan's First Vice President Deng Gai reportedly advised and influenced another South Sudanese government official to execute Dong and Aggrey after they were kidnapped from Kenya. Deng ostensibly believed that by murdering Dong and Aggrey he would weaken support for opposition leader Riek Machar and thus solidify his political position within the SPLM-IO and keep his position as First Vice President. Further, Deng had reportedly arranged the abduction of Dong and Aggrey in an effort to intimidate SPLM-IO members and officials to abandon Riek Machar and return to Juba, South Sudan to support Deng. Deng had regularly sent his own security officials to monitor and plan the abduction of SPLM-IO members located outside of South Sudan, and it was believed that Deng wanted to send a clear message to all SPLM-IO members that they were not safe even outside of South Sudan and that they must support Deng.

Deng is being designated for being responsible for, being complicit in, or having directly/ indirectly engaged in serious human rights abuse.

Information on the individual designated today.

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